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SERMON CCCCXI.

MORAL USES OF THE SEA,

DELIVERED ON BOARD THE PACKET SHIP VICTORIA, CAPT. MORGAN,
AT SEA, JULY, 1845.

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GENESIS I. 10.—“And God called the dry land Earth: and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: And God saw that it was good.”

Not a few have wondered why God, in creating a world for the habitation of man, should have chosen to hide three-fourths of its surface under a waste of waters. Doubtless it had been as easy for him to have made it a good round ball of meadow and plough-land. The field where leviathan plays might as well have been given to the reaper: the fickle domain of waters might as well have been erected into a firm continent of land, and covered with flourishing and populous empires. Why, then, asks the inquisitive thought of man, why so great waste in the works of God? why has He ordained these great oceans, and set the habitable parts of the world thus islanded between them? why spread out these vast regions of waste, to suppress the fruitfulness and stunt the populousness of his realm?

That He has done it we know. We also know his opinion of the arrangement—God saw that it was good. This should be enough to check all presumptuous judgments and over curious questions: God has done it, and in His view it is good.

Still, if our object be not to judge God, but to instruct ourselves, the whole field is open, and we may inquire at pleasure. And now that we are out upon this field of waters, cut off from the society of man, and from all the works of God, save the waters themselves, it cannot be inappropriate to inquire, What is the meaning

* Having been requested, in the absence of the Author, to superintend the printing of this Discourse, I venture to promise the reader no ordinary gratification and delight; and to express my admiration that a performance so full of thought, and life, and beauty, should have been thrown off, at the moment, on shipboard.

THO. H. SKINNER.

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and use of the sea? for what beneficent end or object may we suppose the Almighty Creator to have ordained its existence?

Were this question put by the natural philosopher, he would proceed at once to show that the sea tempers the climate of the land, making the heat less intense and the cold less rigorous; that the sea is a great store-house of provisions in itself, and also of waters for the land, without which even that were unfruitful; and many other things of a like nature, all of which may be true, and yet it cannot be said, with any confidence, that God could not have tempered the climate of the land as well, and made it as fruitful, without the sea.

It is only when we look at the *moral* uses of the world, its uses in the discipline of mind and character, where the free will of man, if it is to be preserved in its freedom, requires that God should condescend to particular means and expedients—it is only here that we seem to grasp those imperative and momentous reasons which can be said, with most confidence, to have determined God's arrangement in the matter we are considering. Indeed, there is a kind of impropriety in considering physical ends or causes as being, in any case, the final causes of God's works; for to God there is, in strict reason, no final cause but virtue or moral good. To this all things are subordinate; for this all things are done. When we say that the world was made for the habitation of man, we do not mean, if we rightly understand ourselves, that it is made to contain as many men as possible, in as much of plenty and ease as possible. In that case, most manifestly, God should have made as many acres of good productive land as possible; nay, He should have made the earth as large as possible. Having it for his problem to raise the most numerous possible herd of men, He has only to enlarge his pasture. For the same reason, too, there should be no rigors of heat or of frost, no deserts, whether of sand or snow, no tempests, no fruitless seasons. Most manifestly the world is made to be the habitation of man, in some other and far different sense. Rather is it built to bless him as a moral creature, so ordered and fitted up that it shall most powerfully conduce to make him truly a man, a creature of intelligence, society, love and duty. Having this for his design, He has rather sought to limit than to extend the number of our race; for a school of virtue, you will observe, may be too large, as well as too easy, for the benefit of the pupil. Therefore, He gives us a small globe to inhabit, narrows down our field still farther by rigors of perpetual frost, and barren mountains, and oceans of water—all that He may bring us into compass and compression, and set us under the holy discipline of danger, toil and hardship; for these are the best, the only sufficient instruments of knowledge and character. To such a being as man, virtue can only be a conquest.

Prepared by views like these, let us go on to ask, *What are the*

moral uses of the sea? wherein does it appear to have been added for the moral benefit of the world?

I think it will appear, as we prosecute this inquiry, that the ordinance of the sea is so thoroughly interwoven with all that is of the highest interest to man—the progress of society, art, government, science and religion—in a word, all that is included in moral advancement—that, without the sea, the world could not be considered a fit habitation for man. Nor will it be difficult for you, I trust, to believe that when the Almighty smiled upon the waters and the land, and pronounced them good, He had some especial reference to the moral benefit of that being whose residence He was preparing.

One great problem of God, in building a school for man, was, how to distribute the school; for it is manifest that no one government, or society, could fill and occupy the whole domain—certainly not, without producing indefinite confusion and oppression, and sacrificing many of the most powerful stimulants to energy and advancement of every sort. Neither could it be done, without exalting the throne or governing power to such a pitch of eminence as would probably attract the religious homage of mankind, and set it at the head of a universal Lamaism. But if the world is to be distributed into nations, or kingdoms, which are likely to be always jealous of each other and sometimes hostile, they need to be separated by natural barriers, such as will prevent strife by circling them within definite boundaries, and, when they are in actual strife, will fortify them against destruction one from the other. This is effected, in part, by interposing mountains and rivers, but more effectually, and on a larger scale, by spreading seas and oceans between them. These great bodies of water can be passed more easily for purposes of convenience than for those of destruction. Indeed, it is impossible for whole nations to pour across them for purposes of invasion, as across a mere geographical line. Nature is here the grand distributor and fortifier of nations. She draws her circle of waters, not around some castle or fortified citidal of art, but around whole nations themselves. Then it is within these fortified circles of nature, that nations are to unfold their power and have their advancement. Such was Greece, cut off from all the world by boundaries of rock and water, which no Xerxes with his invading army could effectually pass; having, at the same time, enough of strife and struggle within to keep her on the alert and waken all her powers to vigorous exercise. Such is England now. England, for so many ages past the foremost light of Europe, the bulwark of law, the great temple of religion, could never have been what it is, or anything but the skirt of some nation comparatively undistinguished, had not the Almighty drawn his circle of waters around it, and girded it with strength, to be the right hand of his power. It is the boundaries of nations, too, that give them locality

and settle those historic associations which are the conscious life of society and the source of all great and high emotions; otherwise they fly to perpetual vagrancy and dissipation—there is no settlement, no sense of place or compression, and, as nothing takes root, nothing grows. Thus the ancient Scythian, roaming over the vast levels of the north, is succeeded by the modern Tartar; both equally wild and uncultivated—the father of three thousand years ago and the son of to-day.

Again it will be found that the oceans and seas have sometimes contributed, beyond all power of estimation, to the moral and social advancement of the race, by separating one part of the world even from the knowledge of another, and preserving it for discovery and occupation at an advanced period of history. Had the territory of the United States been conjoined to the eastern shore of Asia, or the western of Europe, or had there been no oceans interposed to break the continuous circle of land, it is obvious that the old and worn-out forms of civilization would have wanted a spur to reform and improvement that is now supplied. When, at length, the New World was discovered, then was man called out, as it were, to begin again. The trammels of ancient society and custom, which no mere human power could burst, were burst by the fiat of Providence, and man went forth to try his fortunes once more, carrying with him all the advantages of a previous experience. I set up for the United States no invidious claim of precedence. We acknowledge our rawness and obscurity, in comparison with the splendor and high refinement of more ancient nations. We only claim it as our good fortune that we are a new nation, peopled by men of a new world, who had new principles to be tested, for the common benefit of mankind. As such the eye of the world is upon us, and has been for many years. The great thought of our institutions—the happiness and elevation of the individual man—is gradually and silently working its way into all the old fabrics of legitimacy in Christendom, and compelling the homage of power in all its high places. Whatever motion there has been in European affairs for the last half century—all the mitigations of law, the dynasties subverted, the constitutions conceded, the enlarged liberty of conscience and the press, popular education—everything that goes to make society benignant—has been instigated, more or less directly, by the great idea that is embodied and represented in the institutions of the United States. This same great idea, the well-being and character of the individual man, has been brought forth, too, to offer itself to the world, just at the right time. Without it, we may well doubt whether the institutions of Europe had not come to their limit, beyond which they had not, in themselves, any power of advancement. Had it come earlier, Europe was not ready for it. The immense advantage that is thus to accrue to mankind, as regards the great interests of truth, society and religious virtue, from the

fact that our Western Hemisphere was kept hidden for so many ages, beyond an impassible ocean, to be opened, in due time, for the planting and propagation of new ideas, otherwise destined to perish, no mind can estimate. Nor is this process of planting yet exhausted.—There are islands in the Southern Oceans larger than England, that are yet to become seats of power and of empire, and possibly to shine as lights of Antarctic history eclipsing those of the north; or, if not eclipsing, giving to all the northern climes, both of the Eastern and Western Worlds, the experiment of new principles, needful to their progress and happiness.

But it is another and yet more impressive view of the moral utility of seas and oceans, that, while they have a disconnecting power operating in the ways first specified, they have at the same time a connecting power, bringing all regions and climes into correspondence and commercial interchange. Fortified by oceans and seas against injury from each other, they are yet united by the same for purposes of mutual benefit. Were there no seas, were the globe covered by a continuous sheet of land, how different the history of the past from what it has been! how different the moral and intellectual state of human society from what it now is! There being no medium of commerce, save that of land travel, no intercourse could exist between nations remote from each other. They would know each other only by a kind of tradition, as now we know the past. Tradition, too, in its long and uncertain transit across the longitude of the world, would clothe itself in fable, and we, instead of being made to feel the common brotherhood of man as now, should probably be fast in the belief that the opposite hemisphere of the world is peopled by giants, Centaurs, Anthropophagi, and such-like fabulous monsters. There would, of course, be no commerce, except between nations that are adjacent; and society, being life without motion or stimulus, would rot itself down into irredeemable bigotry and decrepitude. God would not have it so. On the ocean, which is the broad public highway of the Almighty, nations pass and re-pass, visit and revisit each other, and those which are remote as freely as those which are near. And it is this fluid element that gives fluidity and progress to the institutions and opinions of the race. It is only in the great inland regions of the world, as in Central Africa and Asia, that bigotry and inveterate custom have their seat. In these vast regions that never saw the sea, regions remote from the visits of commerce and the moving world, men have lived from age to age without progress, or the idea of progress, crushed under their despotisms, held fast in the chains of indomitable superstition, rooted down like their trees, and motionless as their mountains. In the mean time, the shores and islands of the world have felt the pulse of human society, and yielded themselves to progress. It is, in a word, this fluid sea, on whose bosom the free winds of heaven are wafting us to-day, which represents all mobility

and progress in the human state. Without this interposed, the rock-based continents themselves were not more fixed than the habits and opinions of mankind. On the other hand, you will observe that the prejudices of men who live upon and by the waters are never invincible. They admit of change, somewhat by habit and association, as their element changes, and they shift their sail to the winds. Hence it was, in part; may we not believe, that our Saviour began his mission on the shores of Gennessaret, and among the boatmen there. Out of these, too, he chose his apostles, because they had the ductility requisite to receive new truths and new opinions of duty. Among them he had few prejudices to encounter, while at Jerusalem every mind was set against him with obstinacy as firm as the rocks of Zion. So it was never a Babylon, or a Timbuctoo, or any city of the inland regions, that was forward to change and improvement. But it was a Tyre, queen of the sea; a Carthage, sending out her ships, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, to Britain and the Northern Isles; an Athens, an Alexandria—these were the seats of art, and thought, and learning, and liberal improvement of every sort. So, too, it was the Italian commercial cities that broke up the dark ages, and gave the modern nations that impulse which set them forward in their career of art and social refinement, and, remotely speaking, of liberty.

The spirit of commerce, too, is the spirit of peace, its interest the interest of peace, and peace is the element of all moral progress, as war is the element of all barbarism and desolation. Every ship that sails the ocean is a pledge for peace to the extent of its value—every sail a more appropriate symbol of peace than the olive-branch itself. Commerce, too, has at length changed the relative position of nations. Once upon a footing of barbarism, they are now placed on a footing of friendship and civilization. In the most splendid days of Athens, piracy was a trade, not a crime; for it was the opinion that nations are naturally hostile, and will, of course, prey upon each other. But now, at length, commerce has created for itself a great system of international and commercial law, which, to a certain extent, makes one empire of all the nations, maintaining the rights of person and property, when abroad upon the ocean, or in other lands, as carefully and efficiently as if there were but one nation or people on the globe. Search the history of man, from the beginning till now, you will find among all the arts, inventions and institutions of the race, no one so beneficent, none that reveals so broad a stride of progress, as this. And it promises yet to go on, extending its sway, till it has given rules to all the conduct of nations, provided redress for all injuries, and thus tawed out forever all war from the earth.

The nations engaged in commerce will, of course, be the most forward nations. In perpetual intercourse with each other, they will ever be adopting the inventions, copying the good institutions,

and rectifying the opinions, one of another; for the man of commerce is never a bigot. He goes to buy in other nations, commodities that are wanted in his own. He is therefore in the habit of valuing what is valuable in other countries, and so, proportionally, are the people or nation that consumes the commodities of other countries. And so much is there in this, that the government, the literature, nay, even the religion of every civilized nation must receive a modifying influence from all the nations with whom it maintains an active commerce. In opinions, literature, arts, laws—nay, in everything—they must gradually approximate, till they coalesce, at last, in one and the same catholic standard of value and excellence. Commerce is itself catholic, and it seems to be the sublime purpose of God, in its appointment, to make everything else so, that, as all are of one blood, so, at last, they shall be one conscious brotherhood.

In the mean time, the nations most forward in art and civilization are approaching, by the almost omnipresent commerce they maintain, all the rude and barbarous nations of the world, carrying with them, wherever they go, all those signs of precedence by which these nations may be impressed with a sense of their backwardness, and set forward in a career of improvement. They need only be visited by the ships, or especially the steam-vessels, of European commerce, to see that they are in their childhood, and there must remain, except as they adopt the science and the institutions of European nations. What, consequently, do we behold? Not the wilds of Northern Russia only, not the islands only of the sea, becoming members of European laws, arts and manners—but the throne of Siam inquiring after the methods and truths of the West; all British India studying English, in a sense more real than the study of words; Muscat sending over to examine and copy our arts; both branches of the Mohammedan empire receiving freely, and carefully protecting, Christian travellers, and adopting, as fast as they can, the European modes of war and customs of society; China beginning to doubt whether she is indeed the Celestial Empire, and doomed, ere twenty years are gone by, to be as emulous of what is European as Egypt or Turkey now is. All this by the power of commerce. They feel our shadow cast on their weakness, and their hearts sink within them, as if they had seen a people taller than they. For the same reason, too, the false gods are trembling in their seats the world over, and all the strongholds of spiritual delusion shaking to the fall. The sails of commerce are the wings of truth. Wherever it goes (and where does it not?) the power of science, and of all that belongs to cultivated manhood, is felt. The universal air becomes filled with new ideas, and man looks out from the prison of darkness in which he has been lying, chained and blinded, sees a dawn arising on the hills, and feels the morning-breath of truth and liberty.

What I have said, thus far, is not so distinctively religious as some might expect in a Christian discourse. But you will observe that all which I have said, in this general way, of human advancement, as connected with the uses of the sea, involves religious advancement, both as regards knowledge and character. All the advancement, too, of which I have spoken, is, in one view, the work of Christianity; for this it is which has given to Christendom its precedence. And it is precisely the office of the Christian faith that it shall thus elevate and bless mankind—bless them, not in their devotions only, not in their sacraments, or in passing to other worlds, but in everything that constitutes their mortal life—in society, art, science, wealth, government—all that adorns, elevates, fortifies, and purifies their being. You will also perceive that the very tone of Christian piety itself, especially where it is not tempered, as in the United States, by the presence and toleration of all varieties of faith and worship, needs to be modulated and softened by the influence of a general intercourse with mankind; for such is the narrowness of man, that even the love of Christ itself is in perpetual danger of dwindling to a mere bigot prejudice in the soul; mistaking its mere forms for substance; becoming less generous in its breadth the more intense it is in degree; and even measuring out the judgment of the world by the thimble in which its own volume and dimensions are cast. The piety of the Church can never attain to its proper power and beauty till it has become thoroughly catholic in its spirit; a result which is to be continually favored and assisted by the influence of a catholic commerce. I do, indeed, anticipate a day for man, when commerce itself shall become religious, and religion commercial; when the holy and the useful shall be blended in a common life of brotherhood and duty, comprising all the human kindred of the globe.

Such an expectation, too, is the more reasonable, when you consider that commerce is so manifestly showing herself to be the handmaid of religion, by opening, as I just now said, the way for the universal spread of Christianity. It quells the prejudices of the nations, and shames away all confidence in their gods and institutions, and then the Church of God, as the ground is cleared, or being cleared, comes in to fill the chasm that is made, by offering a better faith. What, then, do we see, but that the ocean is becoming the pathway of the Lord? He is visiting the nations, and they shake before him! The islands give up first—the continents must follow! One thing is always sure—either commerce must fold up its sails, and the ocean dry up in its bed, (which few will expect,) or else every form of idolatry and barbarous worship must cease from the world. This I say apart from all the Christian effects and instrumentalities supplied by missions; for these are as yet insignificant, compared with those mighty workings of Providence whose path is in the sea. But if these precede, those must follow.

As man is a religious being, God will never undertake to rob him of a false religion without giving him a better. Neither can any Christian mind contemplate the rapid and powerful changes which in our day, have been wrought in the practical position of the heathen nations, without believing that some great design of Providence is on foot, that promises the universal spread of the Christian faith and the spiritual redemption of all the races of mankind. "Lift up thine eyes around about and see, all they gather themselves together they come unto thee! The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee!"

The sea has yet another kind of moral and religious use, which is more direct and immediate. The liquid acres of the deep, tossing themselves evermore to the winds, and rolling their mighty anthem round the world, may be even the most valuable and productive acres God has made. Great emotions and devout affections are better fruits than corn, more precious luxuries than wine or oil. And God has built the world with a visible aim to exercise his creature with whatever is lofty in conception, holy in feeling, and filial in purpose towards himself. All the trials and storms of the land have this same object. To make the soul great, He gives us great dangers to meet, great obstacles to conquer. Deserts, famines, pestilences, walking in darkness, regions of cold and wintry snow, hail and tempest—none of these are in his view, elements of waste and destruction, because they go to fructify the moral man. As related to the moral kingdom of God, they are engines of truth, purity, strength, and all that is great and holy in character. The sea is a productive element of the same class. What man that has ever been upon the deep has not felt his nothingness, and been humbled, for the time at least, of his pride? How many have received lessons of patience from the sea? How many here have bowed, who never bowed before, to the tremendous sovereignty of God? How many prayers, otherwise silent, have gone up, to fill the sky and circle the world, from wives and mothers, imploring his protecting presence with the husbands and sons they have trusted to the deep? It is of the greatest consequence, too, that such a being as God should have images prepared to express Him and set Him before the mind of man in all the grandeur of his attributes. These He has provided in the heavens and the sea, which are two great images of his vastness and power; the one, remote, addressing itself to cultivated reason and science—the other, nigh, to mere sense, and physically efficient, a liquid symbol of the infinitude of God. We are ourselves, upon it resting in peace or quailing with dread, as if wafted by his goodness, or tossed by the tremendous billows of his will. It is remarkable, too, how many of the best and most powerful images of God in the Scriptures are borrowed from the sea. "Canst thou by searching find out God? The measure

thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."—"Thy judgments are a great deep."—"Who shut up the sea with doors? I made the cloud the garment thereof, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."—"Which alone spreadeth out the heavens and treadeth upon the waves of the sea."—"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters."—"The waters saw thee, O Lord, the waters saw thee; they were afraid, the depths also were troubled!" Every kind of vastness—immensity, infinity, eternity, mystery, omnipotence—has its type in the sea, and there is much more of God in the world, for man to see and feel, as the sea can express, and as much more of worship and piety as there is of God.

Doubtless we have all been happy in the pleasant society and lively scenes that have thus far distinguished our voyage. Have you seen the Almighty, too, in his path upon the waters? Have you felt his power, blessed yourself in the grandeur of his mystery, leaned upon the majesty of his purposes with a more feeling and filial devotion? The heart that finds no God upon the sea, and delights not there to feel the waves of emotion from his presence roll over it, may go where it will in quest of the pitiful and shallow pleasures appropriate to its capacity, but it has no room for God, or it would seem, for anything great or holy.

Doubtless it will occur to some of you, that the moral and religious character of the seafaring race does not favor the view I have taken of the benefits accruing to mankind from the sea. This however, is rather the fault of the land than of the water. It is on land, that the vices of the sea have their cause and sustenance. There is not a more open, fine-spirited race of beings on earth than sailors. But when they reach the land, they are too much neglected by the good, and always surrounded by the wicked, who hasten to make them their prey. Latterly, more has been attempted for their benefit, and the results accomplished are such as cannot but surprise us. Far enough are they from hopelessness, if so great a change can be wrought in so short a time, by means so limited. Indeed, I might urge it as one of the best proofs of the mitigating and softening influence of the sea, that no dejected race of landsmen could ever have been made to show the effects of Christian effort and kindness so speedily, or by so many and fine examples of Christian character. And I fully believe that the time is at hand when all that pertains to commerce is to be sanctified by virtue and religion, as of right it should be; when the mariners will be blended with all the other worshippers on shore, in the exercise of common privileges, and as members of a common brotherhood; when the ships will have their Sabbath, and become temples of praise on the deep; when habits of temperance, and banks for saving, will secure them in thrift, and assist to give them character when they

will no more live an unconnected, isolated, and therefore reckless life, but will have their wives and children vested here and there, in some neat cottage among the hills, to be to them, when abroad, the anchor of their affections and the security of their virtue; when they will go forth, also, to distant climes and barbarous shores, with all their noble and generous traits sanctified by religion, to represent the beauty of Christ to men, and become examples of all that is good and beneficent in his Gospel. Be it ours to aid a purpose so desirable, theirs to realize it in their conduct and character.

I cannot better conclude, than by referring to a thought suggested by my text, and illustrated by my whole course of remark, viz. this: That God made the world for salvation. Even in that earliest moment, when our orb was rising out of chaos, and reeking with the moisture of a first morning, God is seen to have been studying the moral benefit and blessing of our race. He did not make the seas too large. He laid them where they should be.—He swept their boundaries with his finger, in the right place. The floods lift up their voice, the floods lift up their waves, but they are not too furious or dangerous. The Lord on High is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. God manages and guides this army of waters—every wave is in his purposes and rolls at his feet. He is over all as a God of Salvation, and the field He covers with his waters. He makes productive. When He called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called the seas, then had He in mind the kingdom of his Son, and the glory and happiness of a race yet uncreated. He looked—He viewed it again—He saw that it was good. And the good that he saw is the good that is coming, and to come, when the sea shall have fulfilled its moral purpose, and all kindred and people that dwell upon its shores shall respond to the ever-living anthem it raises to its Author. Then let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before the Lord!

SERMON CCCCXII.

BY REV. JACOB ABBOTT.

NEW YORK.

SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL,

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you — 1 Pet. v. 6, 7.

God enjoins upon men a spirit of submission to his will on *their* account, not on his own. In this respect he differs from human monarchs. They condemn insubordination on the part of their subjects, because it endangers their own power. The spirit of discontent and sedition among a people, perplexes cabinets, demands increased expenditures for troops and munitions of war, and results sometimes in a rebellion which drives the monarch from his throne. But no murmurs of discontent, no repinings, no fruitless struggles against God can perplex his government or disturb his repose. No resistance can impede the execution of his decrees, and no rebellion ever shake the firm foundations of his throne. So that God enjoins upon us submission to his will for our sakes, not for his own. *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

How *useless*, for a creature to attempt to resist his Creator—a poor captive insantly beating his head against the stone walls or iron grating of the confinement which his condition requires, or as our Savior expressed it in his remonstrance with Saul, an impatient ox who kicks against the commands of his master, and strikes only the points of the goad. Hopeless however as this resistance is, the unsubdued spirit of man, twists and turns under the mighty hand that is upon him, in the vain attempt to diminish its pressure or escape from its control. All the restless repining, all the uneasy fears, all the unavailing and useless complaints, and regrets at what is past or inevitable, are only so many struggles of a spirit in bondage, which has not learned to submit to the condition which its almighty master has thought it best for a time to impose.

Some persons confound submissiveness with tameness and inefficiency of spirit; but the truth is, on the other hand, that the true beauty and glory of submission cannot be seen in their greatest perfection except in connexion with character and conduct of the highest native energy. The Apostle Paul, who braved every

danger, who shrunk from no toil, whose action was in all cases most prompt and decisive, who traversed the whole known world under impulses as strong as ever moved a human soul, was, in the presence of God, a *very child*. Always self possessed and calm, he preserved a humble and docile equanimity under all circumstances of danger or of pain. In shipwreck at sea, he was quiet and unmoved while all around him was consternation; he did not seek to penetrate by eager and anxious glances the veil which concealed futurity from him. When going into extreme personal danger, in one case, he says, "and now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there." The meaning is that he did not *wish* to know. And harsh imprisonment, which, more than anything else, irritates and chafes common minds, and reveals their restlessness and impatience of control, was to him only a release from the obligations of duty. His mind dismisses at once all anxiety and care. He is in God's hands,—he has nothing to do, and his feelings of calm and happy submission to the divine will express themselves spontaneously in songs of praise. The spirit, so lofty and energetic in its capacities and aims, that no dangers could daunt it and no obstacles discourage, stood subdued and quiet before God, like a lion changing to a lamb when it comes into the presence of its master. Thus the spirit of submissiveness to the divine will takes its highest form when it stands in connexion with a character of the greatest energy, perseverance and decision.

The conversion of the soul is the first subduing of it to submission. Before this it rebels, secretly or openly, against God's law. It turns away from God and lives in a state of insubordination to him. When we are told this from the pulpit, in theological language, we doubt or disbelieve it. We cannot think, we say, that there is any *enmity* between us and our heavenly Father, and we invest the language of the Scriptures which so plainly asserts this, with some vague and metaphorical meaning. And yet after all, though we deny it in words, there is something in our secret consciousness which tells us it is true. In our sad and sorrowful hours when we want some refuge to go to, we cannot find such a refuge in God. The soul, desolate and wretched, finding a blank in every *earthly* direction in which it looks, sees something worse than a blank in the direction of heaven. It instinctively paints to itself the face of God darkened by a frown. While every thing looks comfortless below, it finds only a dark and gloomy dread of retribution when it attempts to look above. In a word, the unchanged soul of man has always a feeling which no reasoning can remove, that there is a vast and eternal power riding sublimely above it, under whose mighty hand it has never yet been humbled. There are times in the experience of every reflecting mind, when the world seems to shrink into insignificant dimensions and withdraw from the view. Its colors fade. Its promises of happiness disappear. Its sorrows

and woes darken the whole horizon. Its brief period of duration seems just at an end, and the heart longs to fly away in search of something to rest upon,—but is repulsed by the still gloomier aspect of every thing beyond the grave, where reigns supreme a power to which it has never yet been willing to bow. Weary at length of this wretched isolation, and touched by a sense of the divine kindness and compassion which seeks to draw us from it, we come and submit. We *humble ourselves* under the mighty hand which we feel it to be vain and wicked to resist any longer.

But he who thus conforms his will to that of God, in respect to the great question of his salvation, will often afterwards find the spirit of insubmission lingering still in his heart, and showing itself in his daily experience of the difficulties and trials of life. But we ought to submit as cheerfully and as fully to the *providence* of God as to his *law*. Instead of this, however, even the christian finds that the little losses and disappointments of life vex him—the misconduct of others irritates him. If he is in circumstances of real or imaginary danger, his mind is filled with restless and anxious solicitude, which he sometimes openly expresses and sometimes he has the good sense to conceal, but which, expressed or concealed, is wholly inconsistent with the aspiration—'Thy will be done.' Now the precept of our text covers the whole ground. It commands us to yield ourselves, wholly, and always, to the disposal of God; to give ourselves to him, to cast all our care upon him, to leave him to assume all responsibility for our protection, our welfare and our happiness,—in small things as well as great, and in great things as well as small: in sickness, in sorrow, in danger, in distress, in hope and in fear, by day and by night, at sea and on the land, *always, everywhere*, and under all circumstances,—with a spirit of peaceful submission which never is anxious and never disturbed.

Such is the general intent and meaning of the text.

We draw from this subject the following practical lessons:

1. We must all, at once, if we have not already done it, submit to God's *law*. He requires of us a life of penitence and faith in His Son. If we have not commenced such a life, we are engaged in that most insane and hopeless of all struggles, an attempt to resist the will of the Supreme. We stand obnoxious to a law which holds its sword of vengeance over us, and delays to strike only in hope of our submission. This law stands around us on every side, rising against us like a wall, immutable and eternal. We cannot evade it. We cannot resist it. We cannot escape its penalties. We can bow spontaneously before it now, and it will then become our protection,—or we can go on in our resistance. It is just as we please. But we cannot close our eyes to what must inevitably be the result of such a contest. If we cannot find it in our hearts to yield to its requirements, we must at last be overwhelmed with its awful retributions.

2. We must submit to God's instructions. We must be willing to receive what he declares to us in his word, without making captious objections to it. And, what is harder still perhaps, we must be satisfied with the imperfect light which he has thought fit to bestow. We learn from the word of God far less than our curiosity calls for, in respect to our origin, our destiny, the reasons for the proceedings of the divine government which we witness, the nature of the future world, and of the scenes and circumstances into which we shall there be ushered. We speak sometimes of the full blaze of the gospel, and it is true that the light which shines upon the path of *present duty* is clear. But the thousand topics relating to our spiritual condition and prospects, into which human curiosity and wonder strongly desire to look, receive from it a very dim and uncertain illumination. Every reflecting mind which seeks to know its future way, finds itself surrounded and enveloped with mystery which even the light of revelation refuses to dispel. The great facts of a resurrection and a judgment to come, are clearly revealed,—but the circumstances, the modes and even the possibilities of them, are shrouded in inscrutable darkness, which the mind wearies and distresses itself in vain to penetrate. The gospel is not a sun shedding a broad illumination over all it shines upon. It is a light upon a dark and dangerous coast, which shines afar, over the stormy ocean, only *penetrating* a darkness which it never was intended to dispel. The mariner can see it clearly. It guides him. It cheers him. It shows him where his port lies. But it is a mere star, after all, shining alone, showing nothing but itself, not even its own reflection in the waters. But it is enough. It is all that the pilot needs to guide him. It tells him that there is a haven there, but it leaves him who watches it and follows it, all uninformed about everything but his own course of present duty. The cities, the towns, the green fields, the thousand happy homes which spread along the shore to which it invites him, it does not reveal. All is as blank and dark in that direction as in the opposite one where rages the stormy expanse over which his ship has come. Just so with the gospel. It is a light, shining on the dark shore of eternity, just simply guiding us there. It reveals to us almost nothing of heaven, but the way to reach it. For what reason God has thus withheld from us all but the most general information respecting his designs and our future condition, we do not know. But we must submit to it. We must be willing to go on in darkness till the light shall come. We must be willing *not to know* what he has thought best not to declare, as well as to receive implicitly what he has vouchsafed to reveal.

3. We must submit to God's Providence. We little realize how few of the circumstances of life on which our welfare and happiness depend are within our control. Man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps. We

must be willing now to submit to this direction. Be active, energetic, patient, persevering and circumspect in all your plans and efforts. Leave nothing undone which it is in your power to do, to ensure success. But when you have done all, calmly and quietly leave the event in his hands who most certainly will decide, whether you have the heart to acquiesce in his decision or not. Allow yourself to feel no solicitude and no anxiety. In circumstances of *danger*, or where you imagine there is danger, remember that restlessness and anxious concern are *insubmission*. You are upon the water in a dark and stormy night,—and you harass yourself and those around you by the indulgence and expression of your fears. You watch the skies,—you make ceaseless and utterly useless enquiries,—you listen to the moaning of the wind, and wish you had not embarked,—and in a word you allow your soul to work itself into a commotion which forms, within, the image and counterpart of the sea of surges which is roaring without, around you. Is this the spirit of submission? Is this a readiness to acquiesce in the divine will concerning you? Can a Christian who has given himself to the Lord, to be disposed of soul and body, for time and for eternity by him, can a Christian thus allow his heart to rebel against the mighty hand that is over him, and call himself a Christian still?

Whenever anything occurs in the dealings of divine Providence, whether it be losses, dangers, or difficulties, we must say to the rising feeling within, Hush, be still. We must calm the anxiety, dismiss the care, and throw the whole soul into an attitude of quiet repose, by bringing home fully to our minds the reflection that the pressure which we feel is the pressure of the mighty hand from above, against which it is most vain as well as wicked to struggle.

So in case of any impending calamity or danger, the hand may exert itself to avert it, but the heart must be still. A reverse of fortune is involving you in difficulties and embarrassments which hedge you up, day by day, more and more closely, and from which there is every day less and less hope of extrication. Or death is coming to sunder some of the dearest ties which entwine your heart: all efforts to relieve and save are vain, and you see the sufferer, whom you love, pining slowly away and sinking gradually and hopelessly towards the grave. In either of these cases you are not indeed to relax your exertions. What little lays in your power, you must faithfully do. But the activity of your movement without must not have a counterpart in restlessness and inquietness of spirit within. Here all must be calm, peaceful, resigned. We must feel that such questions are to be decided by a different voice from ours. This willingness to leave the responsibility where it properly belongs, will take off from your soul one half its burden, and make the other half easily borne.

Some persons say that such a doctrine as this is very easy to preach but very hard to practice; but this is a mistake. It is easy and delightful to practice. It is the contrary which is hard. It is the spirit of insubmission and resistance which is hard. It is the kicking against the pricks which is hard. Whoever learns the lesson of submission to the will of God learns the secret of comfort and happiness. He enjoys everything good more, and suffers everything evil less, than another. In fact there is a kind of pleasure in receiving a cup of trial and sorrow from the hand of one whom you love and adore, when you come thoroughly to feel that he has the right to do with you just as he pleases, and that he will only please to do what is right. Many souls in this frame of mind have *welcomed* disappointment and sorrow. They open their doors to trouble and bid it come in, since it is sent from God.

The celebrated words of Kirk White are not mere poetry; they express feelings to which many hearts can respond:

"Come, Disappointment, come!

Not in thy terrors clad;

Come in thy meekest, saddest guise;

Thy chastening rod but terrifies

The restless and the bad:

But I recline

Beneath thy shrine,

And round my brow, resign'd, thy peaceful cypress twine.

Though Fancy flies away

Before thy hollow tread,

Yet Meditation, in her cell,

Hears, with faint eye, the lingering knell,

That tells her hopes are dead;

And though the tear

By chance appear,

Yet she can smile, and say, My all was not laid here.

Come, Disappointment, come!

Though from Hope's summit hurl'd,

Still, rigid Nurse, thou art forgiven,

For thou severe wert sent from heaven

To wean me from the world:

To turn my eye

From vanity,

And point to scenes of bliss that never, never die.

Come, Disappointment, come!

Thou art not stern to me;

Sad Monitress! I own thy sway,

A votary sad in early day,

I bend my knee to thee.

From sun to sun

My race will run

I only bow, and say, My God, thy will be done!

This submission, however, which makes us willing to receive calmly and patiently whatever divine providence sends, does not prevent our feeling it. Some persons seem to confound resignation with insensibility, or at least they imagine that great grief shows want of resignation. But I suppose that resignation, after all, does

not tend so much to diminish the *depth*, as to change the *character* of sorrow. When we lose a friend, for example, by death or some unhappy alienation, we may *feel the loss* more or less, according to the circumstances of the case, without being resigned to it at all. On the other hand, there may be the most entire and happy acquiescence in the divine will, under the pressure of a sorrow which entirely overwhelms the soul. We must not, therefore, infer, when we see a wife overwhelmed with grief at the loss of a husband, or a mother for a son, we must not infer from the depth of the sufferer's anguish that she is not resigned. She may be perfectly so. Resignation does not turn grief into gladness. It does not weaken sensibility, or stop tears. It takes away the repining, the restlessness and the bitterness of grief,—but leaves the melting tenderness of the soul the same as before. Resignation does not destroy suffering,—it makes us willing to bear suffering. It takes away *resistance* to sorrow from the mind, not the sorrow itself. But in doing so it changes the whole character of the sorrow, not by diminishing its intensity, but by destroying its sting. It remains as great as before, but it ceases to be suffering.

We must say then to the mourner, mourn on,—but mourn, lying sweetly in the arms of divine love. Mourn on, there, and your mourning will be the joy of grief, with all its anguish and bitterness taken away.

Let us all then come at once, and acquiesce cordially and happily in the control of the mighty hand which is over us. That hand, most certainly is over us, and struggle as much as we may, we can never resist its power. We are now *where* we are, and *what* we are, not because ten years ago we planned and designed it, but because God has brought us on to our present position, in a way we knew not of. And where and what we shall be ten years hence, depends upon God's designs for us, not upon our own schemes and plans for ourselves. He will decide whether we are soon to be swallowed up in the vortices of sorrow and death which are whirling around us, or whether we shall float on a little longer. A thousand years hence we shall be where and what he pleases,—enjoying such means of happiness as he may prepare for us, or suffering the pains which his righteous retribution may provide for spirits which cannot bear his gentle sway. Let us learn soon the lesson, "Thy will be done." He who can say this always, everywhere, and under all circumstances, is safe and happy, let what will befall him. His soul is enveloped in a protection which no sharp arrow can pierce. He cannot be hurt; he cannot be wounded. His experience in life will admit of one change,—from *joyful* happiness in *glad* hours, to sad happiness in sorrow and tears. Whatever the change is, it will be peace and happiness still. Let us all learn then to say, "Thy will be done."

PRAYER AND FASTING.

This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.—What kind? A kind of hard, inveterate devils, that get into the heart and stay there. They used of old to take the form of lunatics, and often cast men into the fire, and often into the water. But they have changed somewhat their mode of operation, and having become more refined and quiet, more cunning and less tangible, are far more difficult to be cast out. They know better how to keep concealed, and how to act without violence. They used to inhabit only the hearts of pagans, and men dead in trespasses and sins, but since they have tried successfully the experiment of going into a heart empty and swept and garnished, and set up an establishment there, they often steal into the hearts of God's own people, yea, sometimes seven devils of them together, making no noise, but all so quietly and gradually, that the poor deceived heart does not even know their entrance.

But when they have so got in, it is sad havoc that they make with a man's piety. They fill the heart with tombs and desert places: they cast out its warm affections, and introduce habits of coldness and conformity to this world. They go so far, oftentimes, as to make secret prayer and family prayer to become a mere form and a burthen, and the word of God a sealed, unattractive book.— Sometimes for a season they get so completely the mastery, that there is nothing in the heart or the habits that can be called secret prayer at all. But when this is the case, then generally they are on the eve of some daring and riotous outbreak. They will take possession of men thus secretly mastered, as if they were swine, and will make them run violently down the steep places of their passions into the sea, and perish in the waters. And they who do not go thus outwardly lunatic are none the less to be pitied, so long as the devils stay secretly within them, and wander from room to room, eating up all the piety they can find, and destroying all the soul's spiritual power and comfort.

This kind goeth out but by prayer and fasting. But a man who has had these devils a long time, gets entirely out of the habit of such prayer and fasting as are requisite to overcome them. They are like rats, that stay and thrive in houses where there is much feasting and good cheer. Where there is little prayer and fasting, they have all things to their own mind, and grow strong and multiply. Then it becomes more and more difficult for the man that entertains these devils to pray and fast; but yet prayer and fasting become more and more necessary, if he would ever get back the command over himself, if he would have the Lord Jesus overcome

and bind and cast out the devils, and the Holy Spirit enter and make the heart's chambers his own pure and peaceful abode.

In all spiritual duties, when there is the greatest necessity for them by reason of the sad declining state of the heart, then they are the most tedious and difficult. It is so with fasting and prayer, when there are many devils. And sometimes the whole church gets into such a state that you might as easily move a mountain with a bodkin, as set it of a truth to fasting and prayer. When there has been a long period of worldliness, comfort and ease, when Ephraim in prosperity has got settled on his lees, it is a very difficult thing to disturb him. The mere appointment of a day of fasting and prayer will not do it. The mere formal observance of a day of prayer and fasting will not do it. No, not though there be a good attendance on such a day, and good prayer-meetings attending it, and good Christians going without their dinners, and congratulating themselves that there is once more a fast day in the church. Oh no, that will not do it. Many a man may go without his dinner to frighten the devils, but invite them all back again at supper. Oh no, unless the fasting comes from the heart, and the heart weeps and prays in secret, there is nothing gained. *Real* fasting and prayer is *hard* work, when the evils in the heart have grown quietly and unperceived, and have lain undisturbed in a period of worldly conformity.

Alas! a man has to buckle on his armor, and labor and tug, and strive, before he even finds himself in such a state that he can begin to pray and fast in earnest. Depend upon it, ye Christians who have been fasting and praying, because such a season has been appointed, that your work is but commenced in the observance of such a day. It is a season given you to start from, not a journey gained. It is a signal, at which you are to enter into your closet, and shut your door, and knock, and weep, and pray, day after day, day after day. Now, if you begin to do *this* in the observance of a set day with others, you are indeed doing a great work. You have adopted a fast, such as God chooses, you are engaged in a work which the Savior loves to see, and if you persevere, the devils will give way before you, and the Holy Spirit will fill your heart with power, and peace and joy. But doubtless you must do this as an individual, and not in reliance upon church meetings. You must do it for **YOUR OWN HEART**, and not merely because the church needs reviving. The church *does* need reviving, but remember, it is because **you** need reviving.

DR. CHEEVER.

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